

**Friendship Heights Transportation Management District  
Advisory Committee  
December 8, 2009**

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**Voting Members Present**

David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr (Vice Chair)	Somerset House Management Association

**Non-Voting Members Present**

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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**TMD Staff Present**

Nakengi Byrd	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

**Absent**

Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center
Christine McGrew	M-NCPPC
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Christine Norris	Wisconsin Place
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

**Guests**

Marc Esposito	Bloomingdale's
Joan Kleinman	Office of Rep. Chris Van Hollen
Mary Catherine M. Johns	The Irene Apts.
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Frank Machado	WMATA
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village
David Torchinsky	Law Offices of Binstock, Torchinsky and Associates

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**Abbreviations Used Herein Include:**

BRAC = Base Realignment And Closure

DDOT = District of Columbia Department of Transportation

**Item 1, 2 – Introductions/Minutes review and approval:** Changes to the November minutes included not sending a letter of support for the extension of North Bethesda's Super Fare Share program because County Council voted to extend the program until June 30, 2010, the end of the county's 2010 fiscal year. The committee also rescinded a planned email to be sent to correct the light post problems on Friendship Boulevard; the issue was moot when an official agreed to correct the problem. November's

minutes were approved with changes pending sufficient quorum. [Absence of quorum – minutes will be approved at the January meeting.]

**Item 3 – Chair’s Comments:** Chair **Robert Schwarzbart** thanked **Julian Mansfield** for his work in getting letters of support from Village residents, county and state officials preventing the closing of the Friendship Heights Village Post Office. **Mr. Schwarzbart** reported that member nominations of **Marc Esposito** and **David Torchinsky** have been sent to County Council for vote.

**Frank Machado** from WMATA filled in for **Jackie Smith**, Western Division Superintendent, who could not make it.

**Mr. Mansfield** notified the committee about a DDOT traffic study starting in February to reduce traffic speeds in neighborhoods in upper Northwest D.C.(Chevy Chase and Friendship Heights, D.C.), and which will propose transportation management plans for each neighborhood. He suggested the committee follow the study’s progress.

**Item 4 – Discussion with Joan Kleinman/Q&A:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** introduced **Joan D. Kleinman**, District Director for **Representative Chris Van Hollen’s** office. **Ms. Kleinman** has been Director of **Rep. Van Hollen’s** District Office since 2003.

**Ms. Kleinman** discussed traffic congestion and pedestrian issues she observed during her impromptu site visit along NIH/Bethesda Naval Hospital on her morning drive from her home in Cabin John to the meeting in Friendship Heights. She runs the Congressman’s District-area offices at their two locations -- Rockville and Hyattsville, Maryland. The District Offices handle all cases involving community issues and outreach and individual constituent concerns such as Social Security, home foreclosures, Veteran’s benefits, light outages and potholes. The offices also provide service with expediting passports, and providing Eagle Scout awards and Veteran’s medals. The District Office also played a part in saving the Friendship Heights Post Office from closure by negotiating with the Postmaster General.

**Ms. Kleinman** said the Walter Reed /BRAC consolidation has heightened **Rep. Van Hollen’s** office’s awareness of transportation and commuter issues in Montgomery County and the importance of interconnectedness. This is because of the lack of connectedness between NIH and the Bethesda Naval Hospital commuter programs. **Rep. Van Hollen** is pushing for transportation funding before spring construction projects start. The funding will provide for:

- A new Office of Intermodalism headed by an Under Secretary
- The addition of pedestrian and bicycle safety initiatives to the state’s traffic focus
- Create a new Office of Livability, which includes the following programs:
  - Safe Routes to School
  - A non-motorized transportation pilot program
  - The National Scenic Byways Program
  - United States Bicycle Program

**Mr. Schwarzbart** stated his concerns about already existing issues, such as Metrorail safety not being funded adequately, and believes this will take federal funding to remedy because the Metro system spans three jurisdictions. **Ms. Kleinman** said there is joint appropriations request from DC, Maryland and Virginia for Metro funding in the Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

**Mr. Glass** disagreed, stating that if you fund Metro then all other subway systems in the nation should receive federal funding, such as the BART in San Francisco and the New York subway system. He did not understand why Metro was being singled out to receive federal funding.

**Ms. Brecher** said that one reason why federal funding is important for Metro is because of the federal government's presence in and around Washington, D.C. These locations do not pay taxes which eliminates much of the tax base which could otherwise support Metro's funding.

**Mr. Glass** said that the local communities can set up funding designated for Metro if they wanted.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** talked about the "texting while driving" issue, and suggested that the Federal Government would have to deal with this problem because the number of potential voters who are engaged in this conduct has become so large as to make it politically difficult for more local governments to address it. **Ms. Kleinman** said this issue has been raised before in the Maryland General Assembly and would relay this information to the Congressman.

**Ms. Brecher** asked for clarification regarding the Graduated Teen Driving legislation. **Ms. Kleinman** said she would give her the information. The legislation requires teen drivers to earn 60 hours of supervised driving before taking the driving exam.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** explained his earlier concerns regarding Metro rail safety stating that the Metrorail system safety rating affects its ability to get funding; however, Metro needs the increased funding to improve safety. He believes this is the reason why Metro needs a dedicated federal funding source.

**Mr. Glass** reiterated his position that if dedicated funding is the issue, then the local jurisdictions can vote to provide it.

**Leonard Grant** added his concern over the number of recent accidents in the Metro system due to the lack of maintenance and training. With the large numbers of federal workers that depend on Metro, he believes the federal government should take more action in this area than with other locally-funded transit systems.

**Mary Catherine Johns** said she has had a problem as a commercial property manager of the apartment complex called "The Irene" in providing transportation to the Metro via The Irene shuttle van. She explained the difficulty of securing a space at the Friendship Heights bus station to safely discharge passengers, many of whom have disabilities.

**Mr. Glass** said he believed **Ms. Johns** comments about Metro are a local issue and Montgomery County should take the lead in pushing WMATA to make changes.

**Christine McGrew** added that if local issues such as this are discussed in the open, things will get done; however, if WMATA is viewed as a large entity needing federal intervention then finding a solution will be more difficult.

**Item 5 – WMATA Update:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** welcomed **Frank Machado**, Office Manager of Western Division, filling in for Superintendent **Jackie Smith**.

**Mr. Machado** announced that Metro's fleet remains at 132 buses and has been upgraded with 32 hybrid buses, saving 2000 gallons of diesel fuel a day. There will be changes to Metrobus routes starting December 27<sup>th</sup>, affecting the N3 route from the Western Division. The eastbound route will be relocated to 12<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue. **Mr. Machado** explained that when relocating bus stops, part of WMATA's process is working with local jurisdictions and Congress does not have to be involved in changes.

**Mr. Machado** discussed safety concerns with bus operator cell phone usage by drivers saying that the cell phone policy is “one strike” and the driver is dismissed. **Mr. Machado** explained that the 29 drivers who were rehired after being suspended for cell phone usage were from Metro Access (a Metro contractor). The drivers were rehired because the firings were in breach of contract, even though Metro Access has a zero tolerance policy.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** explained his concerns with gas saving policy stating that many buses violate the 3-minute engine idle policy. **Mr. Machado** said that action is taken to enforce the policy but not everyone at present abides by it.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** mentioned the continuing issue regarding The Irene shuttle van not having a safe place to pick up and drop off passengers. **Mr. Machado** said the request has been forwarded to Metrobus planning. **Ms. Johns** explained that this has been an ongoing issue for about three years and they are still waiting for a response from WMATA. Friendship Heights Village has offered to share their stop but the problem is still unresolved. She believes that The Irene may have to discontinue shuttle bus service because it is not a safe environment for passengers. **Mr. Glass** said there is a communication issue with Metro and a contact person would be helpful. **Mr. Machado** said Metro’s website is a good resource; all issues are forwarded to the General Manager who then distributes to the appropriate department.

**Item 6 – FY11 Budget Priorities:** **Ms Brecher** informed the committee that the FY 2011 budget appears to be more difficult than FY10, so the chances of getting additional funding are slim. Any funding request must have an offset as to what is being cut to cover the cost of the request. The committee had indicated in FY10 funding to open and staff the new TRiPs store in Friendship Heights was a priority. While the store did open, no permanent positions were provided. Use of the store has been growing, but growth has been slowed by the fact the store location cannot be promoted as intensively as desirable due to budget constraints.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested that the committee add an item to include publicizing the TRiPS store. **Mr. Glass** suggested selling the TRiPS store lease. **Ms Brecher** said the store is a requirement of the developer’s development approval and the lease could not be sold, but she would put the discussion of the store as a future agenda item.

**Ms. Brecher** asked members to submit input for budget plan recommendations which will be discussed and approved at January’s meeting. **Mr. Starr** suggested that the TRiPS store’s location be emphasized because of its proximity to the Friendship Heights bus terminal.

**Item 7- Commuter Services Updates:** **Ms. Brecher** explained the matrix for tracking of committee work and progress such as the FY11 budget priorities. **Ms. Brecher** also explained that any inclement weather policy regarding meetings can be decided by the committee. **Mr. Schwarzbart’s** suggestion to postpone meetings to the next day instead of the next week (to have a better idea of the conditions) will be deliberated via email for January’s vote. **Ms. Brecher** also urged the committee to sign up for Alert Montgomery, the county’s email alert system, for weather and other updates.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting date: January 12, 2010

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